

RECITATION.—Evidently very few teachers ask themselves why they teach this subject. If they did, we are sure they would treat it in a more effective manner and in a different spirit. If recitation is meant to train the voice and give the pupil a more cultured habit of speech, then far more attention should be paid to the delivery; if it is meant to foster a refined taste for literature, then the subject-matter must be treated far more fully and intelligently than is the case now. The general meaning of the poem to be learnt should be explained, partly that the interest of the pupils may be aroused, and partly that by understanding the spirit of it they may be enabled to give a more intelligent and effective rendering of it. The teacher should then take it stanza by stanza, helping the pupils to get a vivid picture of the images presented, and in the higher standards encourage them to work out and note the beauties of the figures of speech. Nor should he be disappointed if he apparently fails in these aims, for some of the deepest emotions portrayed in the poem may be beyond the child's vocabulary to express. The child may probably feel these suggestions without comprehending to the full extent the meaning underlying the words. It would therefore be expecting too much to ask him to explain every word and every passage in the poem. A commendable feature of some of our schools is the manner in which the action recitations are given in the lower standards.

NEEDLEWORK.—The quality of the sewing seen by us is very satisfactory, and with few exceptions the prescribed course has been well covered. In the largest schools advanced needlework under the manual regulations has been taken up, and the specimens shown reflect great credit on the instructors.

NATURE-STUDY.—As reported last year, a genuine attempt has been made to treat this subject in its true spirit and scope. Too many teachers, however, confine the lessons to plant-life. Other natural phenomena are largely overlooked as subjects for treatment. It is especially in the subject of nature-study that want of forethought and preparation makes itself felt. Some of the lessons we have seen taught during our visits seem to have been selected on the spur of the moment, and chosen mainly because the pupils may be in a position to gather readily a few specimens on the roadside or in the gardens on their way to and from school. In future we shall expect that the lessons seen by us shall form part and parcel of the programme of nature-study laid down in the teacher's scheme of work. The Progress Book or Lesson Register should also show that the lessons have been given according to this programme. Then, again, we find a good deal of overlapping in different standards, and the programme drawn up for the higher standards is frequently almost identical with that for the lower; nor is the treatment much fuller or more advanced.

SINGING.—We are pleased to note that an effort has been made to remedy some of the defects pointed out in our last report. The songs selected are brighter and more sparkling, and many of the old and time-worn pieces that had become traditions in certain schools have been discarded. Part-singing and simple theory have also been more generally taken up. Sweetness is still too frequently sacrificed for volume. This is a serious defect, but fortunately it is one that is not difficult to overcome if the teacher is determined to do so. A little more time could well be spent in getting the pupils to understand the song chosen. They should never be required to sing anything without at first having a fair comprehension of the meaning of the words and the spirit of the song. If this were done the singing would be far less mechanical than it is now.

SCHOOL-SURROUNDINGS.—Teachers and Committees are to be complimented for the greater interest shown in the beautifying of the school grounds and the care of the premises generally. Next year we intend to institute a system of marks, which we hope will act as an incentive to even greater efforts in this direction.

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We are pleased to see that teachers are recognising that the pupils are to a great extent moulded by their environments, and that neatness and tidiness in the school-surroundings play an important part in inculcating in the children careful and methodical habits. The surroundings impress the Inspector on the one day of his visit; they are impressing the pupil all the days of the year. In order that the supervision of the grounds may be regular and systematic, we have requested teachers to draw up and place on the wall a rota of supervision.

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PROMOTIONS AND EXAMINATIONS.—We shall be in a better position next year to report on the advantages and disadvantages of the new system when we have given it a fair trial for a year. So far these changes do not appear to be for the better. They seem to add another element of vagueness and uncertainty to the vagueness and uncertainty that already largely characterize our present system of education, compared with the solid definite work done in the past. As previously reported by us, a wise discretion has been exercised by most of our teachers in promoting pupils from class to class, and the standard of promotion in our best schools has been high. There are, however, still a few schools in which the pupils are advanced without possessing a thorough grounding in the work of the lower standard. The pupils should be required to pass an examination not only in what might be termed the pass subjects, but also in the other subjects of the syllabus.

SCHEMES OF WORK.—We are impressing on the teachers the absolute necessity of preparing definite and comprehensive schemes of work, not only as a guide to us when we examine the work, but also as a means of preventing random teaching, and of giving system and consistency to the course of work. These schemes should be drawn up at the beginning of the year, and should show at least the minimum amount of work intended to be covered in each subject for each week or quarter. With but very few exceptions the schemes drawn up fall short of the aim for which they are required. They are so indefinite and badly graded and so lacking in continuity that they